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American School
of Classical Studies
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A GROUP OF DIONYSIAC SCULPTURES FOUND
AT CORINTH

[PLATE XIII]

ALTHOUGH Pausanias mentions no temple of Dionysus at Corinth, he describes certain statues of this god in the Agora as having a peculiar sanctity. In fact, it is only natural to suppose that the god of the vine would have had his fair share of worship bestowed on him by the pleasure-loving city, so long devoted to the worship of Aphrodite. At any rate it will cause no surprise that the recent excavations have yielded a group of sculptures that may be called Dionysiac.

This group consists of five members, which will here be described in the order of their discovery.

No. 1 (Fig. 1). A symplegma was found in 1896 in the trial Trench VIII,¹ near the Panagia church and just south of the limits of the Agora, at a depth of about 4 m. The material is Parian marble. The group is composed of three figures, a male person in the centre, presumably Dionysus, a female, probably a Nymph, on his right, and Pan, who furnishes the key to the interpretation, on his left. The figures are under life size, the height of the central figure in its present condition being only 0.52 m.; with the addition of the missing neck, head, and feet it could not have been more than a metre high.

Judging from the strong divergence of the two principal figures, the nymph seems to be struggling to free herself from the advances of Dionysus, whom Pan seems to be encouraging or supporting in the struggle. Representations in which

¹ *Am. J. Arch.*, Second Series, Vol. I, 1897, p. 472.



HEAD OF DIONYSUS FROM CORINTH



FIGURE 1. — DIONYSIAC SYMPLEGMA FROM CORINTH.

Dionysus appears partly overcome by wine and supported by faithful attendants are too numerous to cite here. But if our interpretation of this group is correct, we have a rare case of the god represented in an attempt to combine the pleasures of love and wine, in which attempt he needs the active assistance of Pan.

The imperfect preservation of the group detracts from its importance, and justifies a rather summary treatment of it. The head of Pan is the only one preserved, and this is disproportionately large, which is a common feature in such groups, as well as in single figures.¹

The execution also is very imperfect. It is true that the working out of the two principal figures, especially at the back, is worthy of the art of the fourth century B.C. But Pan is simply blocked out in relief, as it were, and the left hand of Dionysus which rests on his head is a formless mass. There can be little doubt that the sculptor's work was interrupted, as was the case with the Dionysiac symplegma found near the Olympieion in Athens.² Had it not been so interrupted, and had the preservation been complete, there can be no doubt that in spite of the small size of the group it would have made a fine impression. As we now have it, without the heads of the two principal figures, one can hardly judge whether it was a product of Greek Corinth or Roman Corinth. The closest parallel to it which I have been able to find is the group in the Berlin Museum, *Catalogue*, no. 97, in which the inclination of the figures and the position of Pan is reversed. This is characterized as, "Arbeit untergeordneter Art und später Zeit mit Benutzung griechischer Motive." Our group certainly has more of the Greek afflatus about it than this Berlin group.

No. 2. This has already been published in the sixth volume of this *Journal* (1902), p. 427, by Mr. Tucker. It is the lower

¹ A single instance, Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, pl. 716, D, no. 1736, G (Villa Albani), will suffice. Of course the long shaggy beard often contributes to the apparent size of the head.

² *Ephemeris Archaeologike*, 1888, pl. i; Kabbadias, *Catalogue of National Museum*, no. 245.

part of a colossal draped Dionysus with a panther crouching at his right side.

No. 3 (Fig. 2). This is a work of undoubted merit, which, in spite of its fragmentary condition, makes its own impression, even without the assistance of imagination in restoring the missing parts. It was found in 1900, southwest of the west end of the Propylaea, about 12 m. to the south of the foundation on which I would place the colossal statues found at the same time and place.¹ It was thus well inside the Agora.

It is of Parian marble, and is 1.27 m. high and 0.96 m. broad. The surface on which the figures are carved is convex, and the total breadth of the preserved surface is 1.09 m. We have represented in low relief on this slightly curved surface two dancing Maenads,² revealing all the ecstasy and abandon of the Bacchic revel, shown both by the poses impossible to be held for more than a moment and by their garments fluttering in the breeze created by their quick motion. The subject is assured by the fawnskin, the head of which is seen under the girdle of the right-hand Maenad, while one of the feet swings loose from her right side.

That the relief is only a part of a larger field is certain. It is now cut off to the right and left very roughly, and the back is hollowed out in the same rough way. That it formed part of a base for a group of statuary is possible; but the base could not have been circular unless it was of enormous extent, because the curve is so gentle. An elliptical base seems possible.

At the top of the relief very little is lacking. The slight addition required to give room for the head of one figure and the raised right arm of the other would not require a total height of more than 1.50 m.; but in those few inches that are broken away lay what gave the relief its significance and value, the heads. That they must have been excellent can be inferred from the excellence of the rest.

¹ *Am. J. Arch.*, Second Series, Vol. VI, 1902, pp. 7 ff.

² The right-hand Maenad is 1.00 m. high. The distance between her breasts is 0.13 m. The left-hand Maenad's leg measures from knee to sole, 0.40 m.

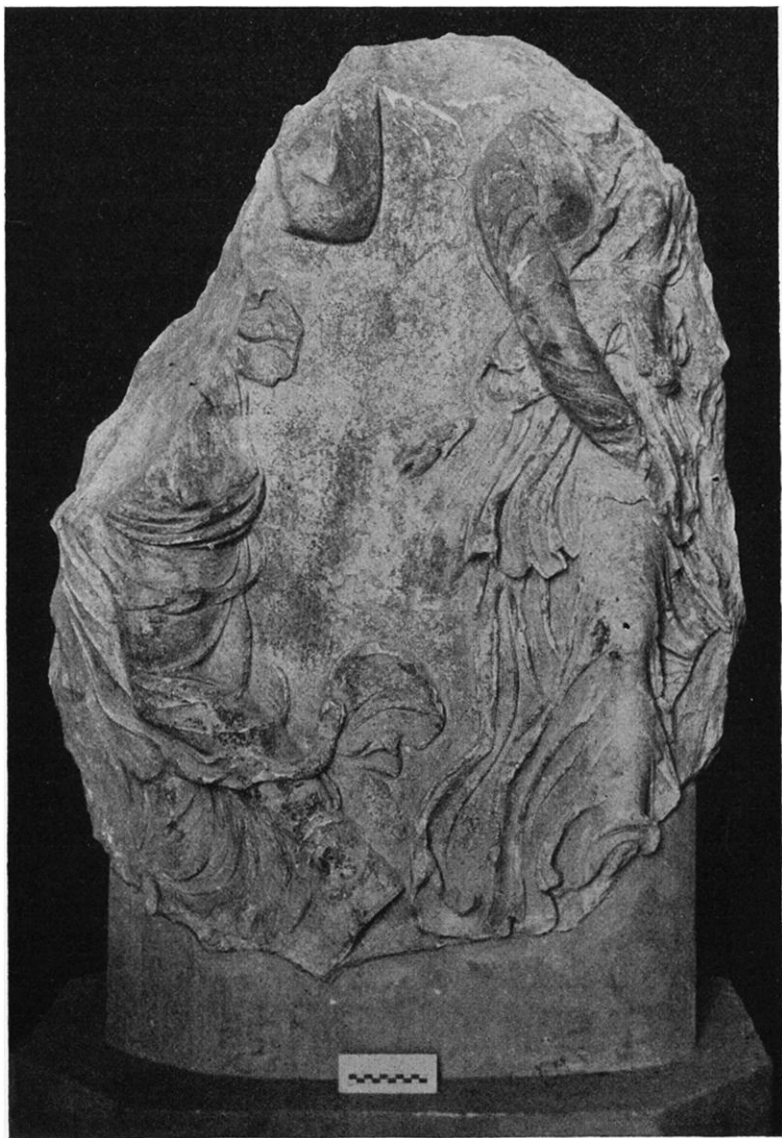


FIGURE 2. — MAENADS ON A RELIEF FROM CORINTH.

One can hardly glance at this relief without being struck by a general similarity between it and the Nike Balustrade. This was the simultaneous expression of all present at the finding of it. The poses impossible to be retained for more than an instant, the fine play of drapery, and the revelation of the forms beneath it are just the features that distinguish the figures on the balustrade. To be more specific, one might see in the right-hand Maenad a striking resemblance to the Nike holding a cow,¹ and in the other, with its precarious pose which must in the next instant end in a fall or a quick recovery, a resemblance to the famous "Sandal-Binder."²

It is true that when the earth was washed away from the relief certain rough places which showed the work of the toothed chisel, for example, in the field over the left shoulder of the right-hand Maenad, raised the suspicion that the work might be Roman. But since parallels to this careless finish are found in some reliefs of a good Greek period, there seems no objection to considering this relief a work of Greek art. Luckily the everlasting question in regard to statues in the round, whether we have to do with an original or a copy, finds less place in reliefs. It may, however, be readily conceded that the artist, be he of the fourth century, or even later, may well have been inspired by the figures of the Nike Balustrade. It may also be supposed that he was under the influence of Skopas' famous "Maenad." That he was, however, no slavish copyist, but both knew his own mind and had a practised hand, is certain.

There are certain details which deserve noting in addition to the general excellence in pose and drapery; for instance, the beautifully wrought sandal on the left foot of the left-hand Maenad and the gathering of the folds of the garment over the instep of the other Maenad.³

¹ Kekulé, *Die Reliefs an der Balustrade der Athena Nike*, Taf. i, A.

² Kekulé, *op. cit.* Taf. iv, O.

³ Only the right leg of this figure is represented; the other is, so to speak, thrown back into the stone. One might, indeed, be in some doubt as to which it is that is presented; but the prominence of the calf of the leg which does appear seems to decide that this is the right leg.

A curious elongated object looking like a leaf with a rib in the middle, which runs out in a projection like a mouse's tail, is seen fluttering from the right hand of the Maenad to the right. The shape is identical with a carving on one end of a dark marble block, found in front of the Propylaea. Since on the opposite end of this block a trailing vine was carved, it seemed only natural to refer this leaf-like object also to the vegetable kingdom. Maenads are wont to appear decked out, not only with ivy, but also with other plants.

Still, the object in question may be the end of a fillet held in the hand, particularly since as a leaf it would be disproportionate in size to the arm.

Many representations more or less parallel to the one under discussion might be cited ; but there is one, not a relief to be sure, but a round figure which, both in attitude and style, seems to match ours most closely, viz. the Dancing Maenad in the Berlin Museum, *Catalogue*, no. 208. (Represented also in Collignon, *Hist. de la Sculpture Grecque*, vol. II, fig. 318, p. 602.) This is spoken of as "eine meisterhafte Arbeit im Character der Kunst der hellenistischen Zeit."¹

We may note that the figures on a base discovered at Ephesus (Collignon, *Hist. de la Sculpture Grecque*, vol. II, fig. 207, p. 391) resemble ours in attitude, but not in spirit.

The two remaining numbers are simply examples of well-known and oft-repeated types. The former has the merit of being an excellent example of the type, while the latter has no claim to any special attention.

No. 4. The head presented in PLATE XIII was found May 15, 1900, a few metres to the south of the relief just described, and four days later than it. It is of Parian marble, somewhat over life size,² and in an almost perfect state of preservation. It is rather effeminate looking, but is with certainty to be

¹ Roscher, *Lex. d. Griech. und Röm. Mythologie*, I, p. 2249.

² Length of head, 0.25 m. ; length of face, 0.205 m. ; distance between outer corners of eyes, 0.105 m. ; breadth at the ears, 0.155 m. ; inner corner of eye to chin, 0.125 m.

regarded as Dionysus, as one sees by a comparison with similar heads, with the right or left arm thrown lazily over the head, which is crowned with ivy.¹ The head here described had five

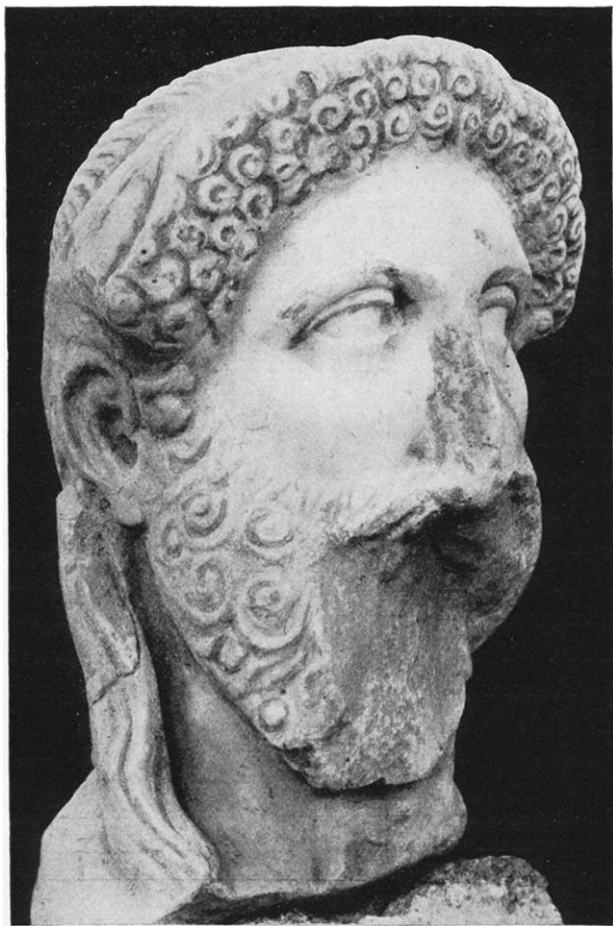


FIGURE 3. — HEAD OF AN ARCHAISTIC DIONYSUS FROM CORINTH.

¹ S. Reinach, *Repertoire de la Statuaire Grecque et Romaine*, vol. I, pp. 375-391, gives some forty heads which are very similar to this. Most exactly similar, with same position of the right arm, are nos. 1368, A, Villa Albani; 1635, A, Fitz William Museum, Cambridge; 1635, St. Mark's, Venice; and 1568, Lansdowne Collection. Other copies are given *op. cit.* II, i, pp. 112-131. One of the finest examples of the type, differing in the position of the hand, is in Woburn Abbey; Furtwängler, *Statuencopien im Altertum*, pl. vii, 1.

ivy leaves on each side of the central part in the hair; but the second one on the left side of the head has been lost. Under the first and third leaves on each side is a cluster of ivy berries. A fillet binds the hair, but appears only over the forehead. At the back, the head is practically unwrought. The long curls which fall from behind the ears over the breast and are broken away, were well worked out, as is evident from what remains. The hand which is thrown over the head must have held some object, inasmuch as two little projections extend out toward each other from the thumb and index finger.

Though every feature of the face is worked with care, and the mouth is left open for expression, there is no real breath of life here. The head will simply pass as one of the best preserved of a type already well represented.

No. 5 (Fig. 3). This head is also of Parian marble, of about life size.¹ It is of a type that by its frequent occurrence has become trite, perhaps beyond any other in antique sculpture, known as the "archaistic Dionysus." In nearly every excavation in Greece replicas are found. It is, therefore, of little consequence that the lower part of the face with most of the beard is broken off. To describe the head in detail would be uncalled for. The only merit which this copy possesses is the very careful working out of the hair and the smooth finish of the face.

RUFUS B. RICHARDSON.

¹ The lower part of the face is so broken away that it is hardly worth while to give measurements. The total height from the top of the series of curls over the forehead to the bottom of what remains of the chin is 0.165 m. It was found back of the line of shops bordering the Lechaeum road toward the north end of the system at a depth of about 2 m.